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MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
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Item 5

Statement by Finland

12 July 2016

Chairperson,

In Finland we are studying with great interest the Expert Mechanism's new thematic **study and advice on the Right to Health and Indigenous Peoples with a Focus on Children and Youth**. We welcome the Expert Mechanism's holistic approach to this theme. Finland is committed to the realization of the right to health for all, including Indigenous Peoples.

Municipalities in Finland have the duty to provide social welfare and health care services for their residents, including the indigenous Sámi population. These services must be of equally high standard for Sámi speakers as to those for the majority population.

Since 2002, the Finnish government has granted a separate discretionary transfer for one budget year at a time to safeguard the availability of Sámi-language social welfare and health care services that complement the municipal services in the Sámi homeland. The purpose of the discretionary government transfer is to cover the costs of social welfare and health care services provided in all the Sámi languages in the Sámi homeland municipalities. In 2016, the discretionary transfer amounts to 480 000 euros.

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The transfer is paid out through the Sámi Parliament. The Sámi Parliament prepares an annual plan for spending the transfer. The annual plan is in practice binding the municipalities, who are the main service providers. In 2016, priority areas of the transfer are services for older people and health care.

The discretionary government transfer is a key channel for the Sámi people to influence the provision, organisation and contents of services arranged for them and thus steer the way in which the Sámi language and culture are maintained and developed in their homeland.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for gender equality issues. It coordinates the implementation of the Government's gender equality policies and ensures that gender is mainstreamed and gender perspectives are included in all areas of decision-making. The Sámi are taken into account in this work.

The Sámi are also taken into consideration when services are developed for victims of violence and discrimination, and they are offered the same services as other groups. Due to the relatively small number of Sámi it may be challenging to maintain the sensitivity and confidentiality of the issues in communities where people tend to know each other. In addition, some issues related to social services and health may be considered as uncommon to talk about or even taboos. To counter these challenges, special measures and practices are introduced into standard services.

We welcome the recent adoption by the Human Rights Council of the resolution on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, including indigenous women and girls. The resolution provides important guidance on how to respond to violence against women, including indigenous women and girls, both at the global and national levels.

Thank you.